

REMARKS**INTRODUCTION:**

In accordance with the foregoing, claims 2, 3, 10-12, 18, 23, and 33 have been canceled, claims 1, 4-7, 13, 19-22, 24, 26-28, and 31 have been amended. No new matter is being presented, and approval and entry are respectfully requested.

Claims 1, 4-9, 13-17, 19-22, and 24-32, are pending and under consideration.

In the Office Action, at page 7, the Examiner indicated that claims 3, 7, 23-25, and 28-32 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form. Applicants respectfully submit that claims 7, 24, 28, and 31 have been rewritten in independent form and are now allowable. Further, Applicants respectfully submit that claims 25 and 30, which depend from now allowable claim 24, and claims 29 and 32, which depend from now allowable claim 28, should be allowable for at least the same reasons as claims 24 and 28, respectively, as well as for the additional features recited therein.

REJECTIONS UNDER 35 U.S.C. §102:

In the Office Action, at page 2, paragraph 3, the Examiner rejected claims 1, 8, and 13 under U.S.C. §102 (b) as being anticipated by Barkheimer (US 2,890,010). The reasons for the rejection are set forth in the Office Action and therefore not repeated. Applicants traverse this rejection and respectfully request reconsideration.

In the Office Action, at page 2 paragraph 4, the Examiner rejected claims 1, 2, 4, 9, 11, 13-15, and 18-22 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Helgeland et al. (US 4,395,010 – hereinafter Helgeland). The reasons for the rejection are set forth in the Office Action and therefore not repeated. Applicants traverse this rejection and respectfully request reconsideration.

In the Office Action, at page 4 paragraph 1, the Examiner rejected claims 1, 9, 10, and 13-15 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by US 6,381,125 (Mizoguchi et al. – hereinafter Mizoguchi). The reasons for the rejection are set forth in the Office Action and therefore not repeated. Applicants traverse this rejection and respectfully request reconsideration.

Applicants respectfully submit that the subject matter of claims 2 and 3 have been incorporated into independent claim 1, noting again that the Examiner indicated the allowability of claim 3 if rewritten in independent form. Additionally, Applicants respectfully submit that the subject matter of claims 18 and 23 have been incorporated into independent claim 13, noting

again that the Examiner indicated the allowability of claim 23 if rewritten in independent form.

Thus, Applicants respectfully submit that independent claims 1 and 13 patentably distinguish over the cited art, and should be allowable for at least the above-mentioned reasons.

REJECTION UNDER 35 U.S.C. §103:

In the Office Action, at page 4, paragraph 2, the Examiner rejected claims 2, 5, 6, 18, 26, and 27 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Barkheimer in view of Helgeland. The reasons for the rejection are set forth in the Office Action and therefore not repeated. Applicants traverse this rejection and respectfully request reconsideration.

In the Office Action, at page 5, paragraph 2, the Examiner rejected claim 12 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Mizoguchi in view of Moore (US 6,30-97,761). The reasons for the rejection are set forth in the Office Action and therefore not repeated. Applicants traverse this rejection and respectfully request reconsideration.

In the Office Action, at page 6, paragraph 1, the Examiner rejected claims 16 and 17 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Mizoguchi in view of Wang (US 6,367,756). The reasons for the rejection are set forth in the Office Action and therefore not repeated. Applicants traverse this rejection and respectfully request reconsideration.

In the Office Action, at page 6, paragraph 2, the Examiner rejected claim 33 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Helgeland in view of Bourcier de Carbon (US 4,166,522). The reasons for the rejection are set forth in the Office Action and therefore not repeated. Applicants traverse this rejection and respectfully request reconsideration.

Applicants respectfully submit that claims 4-6, 8, and 9, which ultimately depend from independent claim 1, should be allowable for at least the same reasons as claim 1, as well as for the additional features recited therein. Additionally, Applicants respectfully submit that claims 14-17, 19-22, and 26-27 which ultimately depend from independent claim 13, should be allowable for at least the same reasons as claim 13, as well as for the additional features recited therein.

CONCLUSION:

In accordance with the foregoing, Applicants respectfully submit that all outstanding objections and rejections have been overcome and/or rendered moot, and further, that all pending claims patentably distinguish over the cited art. Thus, there being no further outstanding objections or rejections, the application is submitted as being in condition for allowance which action is earnestly solicited.

Application No. 10/646,864

Docket No.: 1572.1226

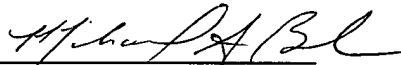
If the Examiner has any remaining issues to be addressed, it is believed that prosecution can be expedited by the Examiner contacting the undersigned attorney for a telephone interview to discuss resolution of such issues.

If there are any underpayments or overpayments of fees associated with the filing of this Amendment, please charge and/or credit the same to our Deposit Account No. 19-3935.

Respectfully submitted,

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